THE BUILDING IN HYDE-PARK AND THE PROFESSION.*

We are told that most important consequences will result from the elaboration of this great idea: the public are fairly roused in the eleventh hour, and will, in future, be regulated by *common sense* only: the lawyers are already setting their houses in order: architecture must follow: we shall get our *quietus* at last: the public will be imposed upon no longer: the Exhibition Building will be considered the *ne plus ultra* of art—the perfection of scientific combinations: iron and glass will be the only materials tolerated during the age of *common sense*: our temporary buildings will be permanent: our permanent buildings will be of temporary construction: we shall not spend 500,000*l.* on a work to last for centuries, but we shall spend 150,000*l.* on the fresh of a year: the conservatories of Chatsworth and Kew will be the types for our museums of art: railway sheds will furnish the most appropriate models for our ecclesiastical structures: our senators, thoroughly imbued with principles of *common sense*, will reform their ways—restrict their acts and discussions within these limits, and regulate the affairs of the nation, ranged like flower-pots in a greenhouse: all flights of the imagination will be cooled down to the standard of *common sense*: Manchester cottons will occupy the places hitherto allotted to the canvas of Raffaelle and Reynolds.

Let me say one word on an important part of Mr. Fergusson's letter, as affecting the profession, viz., the alleged incapacity for producing a work equal in construction and arrangement to Mr. Paxton's. If the public do *not* know, Mr. Fergusson assuredly *knows*, and the profession know it, too, that out of the 270 designs submitted to the committee, there were several (I will mention, among others, Messrs. Turner's, of Dublin,) which closely resembled Mr. Paxton's in construction and general arrangement, and were, in fact, the same idea—a vast building of iron and glass, of simplest arrangement. You know, Mr. Editor, and we all know, for it was *notorious* at the time, that the committee, in deciding, selected those very designs which were *least* in accordance with their own instructions; and I might quote your own journal of that date to this effect. Had Mr. Paxton's design been submitted in competition, it would have been snubbed and scouted like the rest, merely because it was a *common sense* design, and adapted to its purpose. The committee, according to their own report, as quoted by Mr. Fergusson, were ransacking ancient and modern art for an idea, attempting, among a collection of permanent buildings, to find a model suited for a temporary purpose. At length they produced a design impracticable and unadvisable in every sense of the word. In a happy moment, in the eleventh hour, Mr. Paxton's design is placed before them: drowning men will catch at a straw. In spite of the barefaced injustice, first to competitors and then to contractors, and the stultifying their own proceedings, proclaiming their incapacity, the thing is adopted without further delay—the fact being, it let them out of a terrible dilemma: the committee were relieved from the consequences of their own absurd decision, and now seek, or certain parties seek for them, to throw the disgrace of their own mismanagement and incapacity on the shoulders of the profession at large.

I subscribe my name, that it may not be supposed that I am interested in any way, either in the competition or the building, but solely to defend the profession from a most ungrounded and unjust charge of incompetency.† HENRY B. GARLING.

As I find many of your correspondents on the subject of the "Crystal Palace" appear ignorant of the facts subjoined, and, they are of some consequence to me, I beg you will allow me to inform them, through THE BUILDER, that the transept, roofing in the trees, was suggested by the models and plans submitted to the Royal Commissioners by Richard Turner, of Hammersmith Iron Works, Dublin, and Thomas Turner, architect, Belfast; and that theirs was the only design amongst the 245 which contemplated such an arrangement; likewise, that the same plans proposed a semi-circular roof over the transept, centre, and side aisles, but those over the transept and centre aisle were of much greater dimensions than that now being erected in Mr. Paxton's House. I would further beg to inform them that a 200-feet dome, resting on iron columns (but not on bricks and mortar) was proposed by the same persons, in a model submitted to the commissioners, months before the public were asked for suggestions.

Belfast. THOMAS TURNER.

IPSWICH GRAMMAR SCHOOL COMPETITION.

THAT you may see the game out, I send you a note of the proceedings since my last communication. At a meeting of the Town Council of Ipswich, on Wednesday week, a report from the Grammar-school committee was read; and truly it was the coolest thing we have as yet had during this mild winter. After opening with the usual preface to such reports, they proceeded to state that the committee were of opinion that the plan bearing the motto "*Hope*" was entitled to the premium; but that the author of this plan, who was *found* to be Mr. Woolnough, candidly stated it would exceed the estimate: that "at a subsequent meeting the committee awarded the premium to a plan which was *found* to be the production of Mr. Barnes." When we recollect how these gentlemen canvassed the various merits of each plan by *name*, and voted openly by *name* for both of these designs, this *finding* out the name of the author of the chosen design is truly amusing. Let us proceed, however, to the choicest paragraph of this nice document, which says that "Since this decision the subject has assumed a new position. Among the original plans was one sent in by Mr. Fleury, of this town: it was accompanied by a statement that its cost would exceed 3,000*l.*; that he, therefore, did not affect to compete for the premium, but that if it were adopted certain individuals in the town would lend to the corporation 1,000*l.* The committee felt that they could not entertain the offer. The plan was accordingly laid aside in common with the others, which, for the reasons before mentioned, were found to be unsuitable. Since that time the same parties have offered to turn the proposed loan into a gift of 1,000*l.*, and in consequence of that offer, the committee have carefully examined Mr. Fleury's plan (which has undergone considerable improvements), and believing that it affords great additional and useful accommodation, they recommend the council to avail themselves of the offer, and to give the necessary authority for carrying the plan into execution without delay, provided the details (which are not in all respects satisfactory) can be made so, and a satisfactory guarantee be given that the total expenditure will not exceed 4,000*l.*"

Now, Mr. Fleury's plan is the one I referred to in my first communication, as having been allowed to be withdrawn and amended, and the fact is now affirmed by their own words. Mark them well, all ye fifty competitors,—"*which has undergone considerable improvements.*"

But let us lay bare the real meaning of these words. They mean that Mr. Fleury was allowed to considerably alter his original plan, and that afterwards it was thrown aside as utterly worthless, and he has made an entirely fresh design! which, however, "*is not*," even now, "*in all respects satisfactory.*" This latter statement is certainly rather surprising, for it is well known in Ipswich that most of the members of the committee—more especially one of the chief functionaries of the corporate body—have been for many hours daily at Mr. Fleury's office concocting this last design. The *Suffolk Chronicle*, in remarking upon the proceedings generally, says—"There is one feature in the discussion on Wednesday which cannot fail to strike the most careless observer: it is the marked absence of any allusion to the charges of irregularity preferred against the committee by the correspondents of THE BUILDER. The conduct of the whole affair warrants us in again denouncing the present system of architectural competition."

One more extract on the matter, and I have done. Your correspondent, signing himself "Not one of the Committee," who stated things upon "*authority*," and who is well known to be a paid servant of the council, said, in his communication to you:—"that the committee were perfectly uncorrupt may be inferred from the fact, that one local design was rejected *because* it avowedly exceeded in cost the sum stated in their advertisement, *although it was accompanied by an offer of pecuniary assistance to carry it out*." (The italics are his.)

Comment on this would be useless. But the end is not yet.

UNDERMINING BY THE SAPPERS AND MINERS.

I AM pleased to find, from recent letters, that the land-surveyors are fully alive to the encroachments constantly made upon their occupation by the sappers and miners, which encroachments are rapidly increasing. But I would submit, that architects and civil engineers are equally interested in the subject, for they also have suffered, and are likely to suffer, by the usurpation of that body. The barracks, guard-houses, chapels, and other buildings connected with the military, and many of the improvements at the royal residences, are already carried out by them, and, from the number of royal engineers upon Government Boards, which control works of construction, as prisons, railways, docks, harbours, navigation, &c. &c., the tendency appears to me to be ultimately to invest the execution of such works entirely in the sappers and miners.

It should never be lost sight of, that Mr. Chadwick, in his report of 1842, the first of that series since issued, in the whole of which the professions have been systematically sneered at or maligned and abused, states, that the best and cheapest mode of managing the metropolitan buildings, water and gas service, sewers, pavings, scavenging, &c., would be by the agency of a corps of sappers and miners, and he strives hard to show the superior efficiency which would be arrived at by such means, and from that period to the present he has laboured to carry his point, and the fruits of his perseverance have been first felt by the land-surveyors in the loss of the metropolitan survey.

The minute of the Board of Health of last July, which lays it down as imperative that all surveys made under the public Health Act must either be verified or taken by the Ordnance, shows the intention of that Government Board too plainly; and the employment of sappers and miners at the Exhibition building, and the appointment of one of the officers to a post under the Metropolitan Commission of sewers, with other signs equally significant, demonstrate what the professions may expect, if a check be not given.

If there be so numerous a force of sappers and miners that employment cannot be found for them within their own legitimate duties and practice, would it not be better that a portion of the corps should be disbanded at once, rather than they should be allowed to take the bread from the mouths of the civil surveyors, who (unfortunately) are compelled, in the shape of taxes, to contribute to the support of those who are daily depriving them more and more of the means of doing so.

I really think, Sir, it is high time that the professions took up the matter in earnest: the Institutes of Civil Engineers and Architects present the proper arena for the discussion and consideration as to the best means to be adopted, and I am sure your pages will be open for the public expression of opinion by your injured brethren. C. E.

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* Several communications on this subject are inadmissible, on account of the personalities in which they indulge. Abuse is no argument.—ED.

† The writer would, perhaps, wish us to state that the above is but a portion of his communication.—ED.

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